

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 AF-10 SSM-03 PM-04 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 PRS-01
L-03 ACDA-07 /093 W
-----140255Z 107828 /72

R 131430Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5031
INFO DIA WASHDC
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY FT MCNAIR, WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 8133

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG
SUBJ: MEETING OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT MINISTRY OF WAR
GENERAL MOHAMED EL GAMASSY WITH VISITING STUDENTS OF
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

1. SUMMARY: ON 12 MAY 1977 GENERAL GAMASSY MET WITH
VISITING STUDENT OFFICERS FROM THE NATIONAL DEFENSE UNI-
VERSITY FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR. IN A SESSION DEVOTED
TO PRIMARILY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS GEN GAMASSY SPOKE IN AN
OPEN MANNER ON A VARIETY OF CURRENT SUBJECTS. AMONG THE MOST
INTERESTING COMMENTS WERE WITH REGARD TO:
LIBYA - NO HOSTILE INTENT FOR QADHAFI, BUT HOPE HE DOES
NOTHING RASH.
MILITARY EXERCISES- TO DEMONSTRATE (FOR BOTH INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL AUDIENCES) PREPAREDNESS ON ALL FRONTS. WILL NOT
BE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED IN THE FUTURE IN RESPONSE TO ISRAEL'S
SIMILAR POLICY. (SUBJECT OF SEP TEL, STATE 8060)
INTERNATIONAL PEACE KEEPING FORCES- A CONTINUED REQUIREMENT
FOR THE NEXT STEP IN THE PEACE PROCESS.
JANUARY RIOTS- GOVERNMENT ACTED UNWISELY IN SUDDENLY
RAISING PRICES. MILITARY INTERVENED ACCORDING TO LAW
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TO MAINTAIN ORDER.
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SESSION THE TRIP ADVISOR
MAJ GEN LEE USA (RET) GAVE ASSURANCES THESE COMMENTS
WOULD REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

2. GAMASSY OPENED THE SESSION WITH A FEW REMARKS
TO SET THE STAGE FOR GENERAL QUESTIONING. NOTING THAT

THE STUDENTS HAD RECEIVED BRIEFINGS AT THE DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTE AND THE NASSER ACADEMY OF HIGHER LEARNING (EGYPTIAN COUNTERPART OF OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY) HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. THE OCTOBER '73 WAR FOUGHT TO LIBERATE ARAB LAND AND SECURE RIGHTS FOR THE PALESTINIANS. THE WAR DID NOT ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES BUT HAD CONVINCED BOTH SIDES THAT ARMED CONFLICT WAS NOT A SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS. BOTH ARABS AND ISRAELIS WANT A GENEVA CONFERENCE AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. GAMASSY EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT WITH U.S. AND SOVIET HELP BOTH SIDES WILL FIND PEACE, HOWEVER, THE GENERAL SAID HE EXPECTED THE GOING TO BE DIFFICULT BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE CONFERENCE.

B. GAMASSY SAID THE MILITARY SITUATION IN THE SINAI AND ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS WAS QUIET ALTHOUGH NOT STABLE. BOTH THE ISRAELIS AND THE ARAB NATIONS WERE PREPARING MILITARILY IN CASE NO PEACEFUL SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND.

C. ON THE WESTERN FRONT GAMASSY SAID THAT LIBYA HAS INSTIGATED ACTS OF SABATOGE BEGINNING IN 1975 WHICH WERE CARRIED OUT IN VARIOUS CITIES THROUGHOUT EGYPT. AS A RESULT EGYPT HAD DEPLOYED TROOPS TO SECURE THE WESTERN BORDER. EGYPT, HE SAID, HAD PROBLEMS WITH LIBYANS, ONLY QADHAFI. EGYPT HAD NO HOSTILE
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INTENTIONS AGAINST QADHAFI, ACCORDING TO GAMASSY, BUT HE ADDED THAT HE HOPED QADHAFI WOULD NOT DO ANYTHING FOOLISH.

D. TO THE SOUTH, GAMASSY POINTED OUT, EGYPT HAS A TREATY WITH SUDAN FOR MUTUAL ASSISTANCE. IN THIS SECTOR EGYPT WAS WATCHING ETHIOPIA FOR POSSIBLE TROUBLE. SHOULD SUDAN BE ATTACKED, EGYPT WILL PROVIDE ASSISTANCE.

E. GAMASSY DESCRIBED A BELT BEING DRAWN ABOUT EGYPT BY THE SOVIET UNION WHICH, ALTHOUGH INCOMPLETE, WAS BUILDING. THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE WHICH HAD BEEN PROVIDED TO ZAIRE WAS INTENDED TO DEFEND AGAINST THE STRENGTHENING OF THIS BELT.

F. IN SUMMARY GAMASSY SAID THE REAL ENEMY WAS STILL ISRAEL. HOWEVER, THERE WAS A SERIOUS POTENTIAL FOR PROBLEMS WITH LIBYA AND ETHIOPIA AGAINST WHICH EGYPT MUST BE VIGILANT.

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INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 PRS-01
L-03 ACDA-07 /093 W
-----140256Z 108083 /72

R 131430Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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3. GAMASSY THEN TOOK QUESTIONS. BOTH QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS ARE PARAPHRASED FOR BREVITY.

A. Q. IS THERE ANY SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ACTIVITY
IN THE SINAI?

A. THE ACTIVITY IN THE SINAI IS THE NORMAL AND
OBLIGATORY TRAINING NECESSARY FOR PREPAREDNESS. THE
EXERCISES ARE CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS. WE HAVE RECENTLY CONDUCTED
EXERCISES IN THE SINAI, TO THE WEST, AND IN THE RED SEA
TO DEMONSTRATE OUR READINESS IN EACH AREA.

B. Q. WHAT IS YOUR IMPPRESSIONS OF SOVIET ACTIVITY
IN AFRICA?

A. THE SOVIETS HAVE BECOME VERY ACTIVE IN
AFRICA, BEGINNING IN ANGOLA, BUT ALSO IN MOZAMBIQUE AND
ETHIOPIA. I BELIEVE THEY WILL SUCCEED BECAUSE THOSE
COUNTRIES ARE POOR AND NEED ECONOMIC HELP. THIS IS THE
OBVIOUS CONDITION FOR THE SPREAD OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY.

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C. Q. HAVE THERE BEEN MILITARY CONFLICTS WITH LIBYA?

A. NO. ONLY A STUDENTPILOT WHO DEFECTED WITH HIS AIRCRAFT TO EGYPT LAST SATURDAY WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED IN TODAYS NEWSPAPERS. LAST YEAR THERE WERE TWO INCIDENTS WHICH WERE NOT ANNOUNCED. ONE WAS ANOTHER AIRCRAFT DEFECTION. (COMMENT: GAMASSY DID NOT SPECIFY SECOND INCIDENT) THE ROAD BETWEEN ALEXANDRIA AND TOBRUK IS OPEN, BUT CLOSELY CONTROLLED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

D. Q. IS IT POSSIBLE THAT EGYPT AND SOMALIA WILL COOPERATE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO SLOW DOWN OR MAKE LESS EFFECTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND ETHIOPIA?

A. THE SOVIETS HAVE STRONG INFLUENCE IN SOMALI WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS CONTROL SOMALIA COMPLETELY. MENGISTU IS NOW VERY CLOSE TO THE SOVIETS. THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING THE DIFFICULT TASK OF RIDING TWO HORSES SIMULTANEOUSLY. BECAUSE THEY ARE ALREADY IN SOMALIA, THE SOVIETS ATTACH MORE IMPORTANCE TO DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA. EGYPT AND OTHERS ARE TRYING TO UNDERMINE THE SOVIETS IN SOMALIA, BUT IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME.

E. Q. DO YOU FAVOR A MULTINATIONAL AFRICAN MILITARY FORCE TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE INDEPENDENCE OF AFRICAN STATES?

A. IN THEORY THE IDEA IS VERY SOUND: PRACTICALLY IT IS NOT EASY TO ACHIEVE. AS AN EXAMPLE THE ARAB LEAGUE PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT THEORETICAL BASIS FOR A UNIFIED MILITARY FORCE UNDER A SINGLE COMMANDER. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PUT THE THEORY INTO PRACTICE.

F. Q. (1) WILL YOU BE ABLE TO PRODUCE YOUR OWN MILITARY EQUIPMENT SOON?
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(2) WHAT ASSISTANCE WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE IN PRODUCTION OF ARMS?

A. WE HAVE A MILITARY INDUSTRY NOW, ALTHOUGH IT IS DEVOTED MAINLY TO THE PRODUCTION OF SMALL ARMS. THE ARAB ORGANIZATIONS FOR INDUSTRY (AOI) IS CURRENTLY LAYING THE GROUND WORK FOR MORE SOPHISTICATED INDUSTRY. WE EXPECT IN THE FUTURE TO PRODUCE ROCKETS (COMMENTS: READ MISSILES), PLANES, AND HELICOPTERS. HOWEVER, WE WILL NOT BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT, NOR WILL THE RESULTS APPEAR QUICKLY. IT WOULD TAKE TWO AND A HALF YEARS TO PRODUCE

THE FIRST HELICOPTER AND AT LEAST FIVE YEARS FOR A SOPHISTICATED FIGHTER.

G. Q. THE PRESS INDICATED SOME MONTHS AGO THAT FRANCE HAD OFFERED ASSISTANCE IN ESTABLISHING MILITARY INDUSTRY. WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS TOWARD THIS OFFER?

A. EGYPT HAS ACCEPTED THIS HELP. THE AOI HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEVELOP INDUSTRY AND SHALL DO SO WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF FRANCE AND OTHER NATIONS.

H. Q. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVERS FORCE AND THE U.S. WATCH STATIONS?

A. YES, COMPLETELY SATISFIED. THERE HAVE BEEN OCCASIONAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS WITH THEM BY BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL BUT OVERALL THEY ARE VERY GOOD. THE AMERICAN STATIONS ARE VERY EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE THERE IS MUTUAL CONFIDENCE BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL THAT THE STATIONS FUNCTION CAPABLY.

I. Q. DO YOU BELIEVE THE INDEPENDENCE OF DJIBOUTI CREATES A POSSIBILITY FOR CONFLICT?

A. I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WILL BE CONFLICT.
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ETHIOPIA WILL MAKE PROBLEMS, BUT THE RESULT WILL BE FAVORABLE TO DJIBOUTI'S INDEPENDENCE.

J. Q. IS THERE A LONG TERM ROLE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE IN FUTURE PEACE PLANS?

A. IT IS THE ONLY POSSIBILITY NOW. THERE WILL HAVE TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE FREE TO OPERATE IN A BUFFER ZONE 15 OR 20 KM WIDE FOR PERHAPS 5 YEARS, AFTER WHICH THE FORCE CAN GRADUALLY BE DRAWN DOWN.

K. Q. HAVE CHANGES IN YOUR MODE OF TRAINING IN THE SINAI BEEN SUCH THAT THEY COULD MISLEAD ISRAEL ABOUT YOUR INTENTIONS? HOW DO YOU AVOID MISLEADING THEM?

A. WE DO TRAIN IN THE SINAI AND SO DO THEY. WE HAVE ANNOUNCED OUR TRAINING IN ADVANCE. EGYPTIAN CITIZENS HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF OUR EFFORTS IN PREPARATION FOR POSSIBLE TROUBLE IN THE SOUTH AND WEST. SO IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO MAKE PUBLIC OUR SINAI TRAINING TO ASSURE THE PEOPLE WE ARE NOT NEGLECTING THE PRINCIPLE ENEMY. ISRAEL HAS NOT MADE THEIR TRAINING PUBLIC. THEREFORE IN THE FUTURE WE SHALL NOT.

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INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 PRS-01
L-03 ACDA-07 /093 W
-----140257Z 120003 /72

R 131430Z MAY 77
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L. Q. DOES QADHAFI EXPECT HELP FROM THE USSR
THROUGH ALGERIA?

A. YES, HE EXPECTS HELP FROM SOVIET EXPERTS, IN
FACT HE DEPENDS ON THEM. BUT NOT THROUGH ALGERIA.

M. Q. IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE
PROBLEM WITH ISRAEL, WILL THE TROUBLE IN LIBYA PREVENT
YOU FROM REDUCING YOUR ARMED FORCES?

A. IF WE REACH AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL OUR
MILITARY OUTLOOK WILL CHANGE DRASTICALLY, LIBYA WILL NOT
BE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR.

N. Q. DO YOU BELIEVE ISRAEL HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

A. WE BELIEVE ISRAEL HAS THE CAPABILITY TO
MAKE TACTICAL NUCLEAR BOMBS. WE BELIEVE THEY WON'T USE THEM
UNLESS THEY ARE PUSHED TO THE SEA. IF THEY ANNOUNCE
THEY HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON IT WOULD PRESENT A CRITICAL
SITUATION. WE WOULD NEED A COMPARABLE WEAPON.

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O. Q. HOW SERIOUS IS YOUR PROBLEM WITH SPARE PARTS
AND WHAT IS YOUR PROJECTION IN THIS AREA?

A. THE SOVIETS HAVE PROVIDED NO SPARE PARTS SINCE
THE OCTOBER '73 WAR. WE HAVE MANY REQUIREMENTS WHICH WE
SOLVE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. WE MAKE SOME PARTS LOCALLY,
WE PURCHASE SOME PARTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES WHO ALSO
USE SOVIET EQUIPMENT, AND WE BUY SOME PARTS WHICH ARE
PRODUCED IN THIRD COUNTRIES. AIRCRAFT ENGINES ARE A
PARTICULAR PROBLEM AS EVEN SOVIET ALLIES REMAIN DEPENDENT
ON THE USSR FOR SUPPORT. FINALLY WE ARE BUYING WESTERN
EQUIPMENT TO REPLACE SOVIET EQUIPMENT.

P. Q. DO YOU FEEL THE ARMY HAS A ROLE TO TRAIN LARGE
NUMBERS (AS ENGINEERS, TECHNICIANS, ADMINISTRATORS,
ACCOUNTANTS, ETC.) AS ONE ASPECT OF NATION BUILDING?

A. THE CAPABILITY WHICH EXISTS FOR TRAINING IS
DEDICATED TO MILITARY USE. THERE IS NO PLAN TO TRAIN FOR
CIVIL EMPLOYMENT. THERE IS HOWEVER, A FALL-OUT INTO THE
CIVILIAN SECTION FROM THE NORMAL TURNOVER IN WHICH MEN
LEAVE THE MILITARY AFTER THE PERIOD OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE.
SOME ENGINEERS ARE INTEGRATED INTO MILITARY FACTORIES
DIRECTLY AFTER THEIR SERVICE.

Q. Q. DOES NOT THE MODERNIZATION OF YOUR ARMED FORCES

PLACE USUAL STRAIN ON A LIMITED ECONOMY?

A. YES, IT IS A VERY HEAVY DRAIN. BUT THERE ARE
NO ALTERNATIVES. WE BELIEVE EGYPT'S ECONOMY WILL BE
SOUND AGAIN BY 1980.

R. Q. IS IT POSSIBLE THAT IN KEEPING WITH SUPPORT
OF MODERATE REGIMES EGYPT WOULD PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO
ZIMBABWE?

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A. NO, IT IS NOT LIKELY, ZIMBABWE IS TOO FAR
AWAY AND WE MUST NOT DILUTE OUR PRIMARY EFFORT. THE
LIMITED NUMBER OF AIR FORCE PERSONNEL IN ZAIRE DO NOT
AFFECT OUR READINESS AND THEY CAN BE RECALLED QUICKLY.
ZIMBABWE WOULD BE DIFFERENT.

S. Q. WOULD YOU COMMENT ON THE RECENT RIOTS IN
EGYPT AND THE USE OF THE MILITARY IN INTERNAL SECURITY?

A. THE PROBLEM DEVELOPED WHEN PRICES WERE UNWISELY

RAISED SHARPLY AND SUDDENLY WITHOUT ANY EFFORT TO PREPARE THE PEOPLE. COMMUNISTS AND OTHER SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE TROUBLE. THE ARMED FORCES WERE EMPLOYED FOR ABOUT TWO DAYS, BEGINNING ON THE 19TH OF JANUARY. THE USE OF THE ARMED FORCES TO MAINTAIN ORDER WHEN THE POLICE CANNOT COPE IS A NORMAL MILITARY FUNCTION AND IS PROVIDED FOR IN OUR CONSTITUTION.

COMMENT: GEN GAMASSY HANDLED THE QUESTIONS IN OPEN AND DIRECT WAY LEAVING A VERY FAVORABLE IMPRESSION WITH HIS AUDIENCE. ALTHOUGH ONE OR TWO QUESTIONS WERE INCOMPLETELY ANSWERED, HE DID NOT AVOID ANY QUESTIONS. HE SPOKE OF PREPAREDNESS IN CASE THE EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT PEACE WITH ISRAEL FAILED, BUT THESE PREPARATIONS WERE PUT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NORMAL BUSINESS OF AN ARMY ON ALERT AND WITHOUT ANY RHETORIC OF AN OMINOUS THREAT. HE GAVE AN IMPRESSION OF RESTRAINT, OF AVOIDING INFLAMMATORY STYLE IN DEFERENCE TO THE PEACE EFFORT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY TRAINING, UNIVERSITIES, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAIRO08133
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770170-0219
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770563/aaaacbxi.tel
Line Count: 405
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1a803895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2541749
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT MINISTRY OF WAR GENERAL MOHAMED EL GAMASSY WITH VISITING STUDENTS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
TAGS: MILI, PINT, EG, (GAMASSY, MOHAMED EL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1a803895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009